

Where the Pilgrims Settled

Once Plymouth was established, the Aldens and Standishes built homes in Duxbury

By KATHLEEN MAURER MELYMUKA

FOR today's wayfarers en route to Plymouth or Cape Cod, Duxbury, Mass., provides a serene respite as well as a vivid glimpse of the lives of earlier pilgrims.

Just two miles as the seagull flies from Plymouth Rock across Plymouth Bay, or seven miles north on Route 3, Duxbury presents an unexpected cornucopia of early American history. Streets such as Alden, Standish, Mayflower, Pilgrim By-Way, Priscilla Lane and Elder Brewster Lane remind the visitor at every turn of the town's rich past.

A number of the Pilgrims, including John and Priscilla Alden and Miles (locally, most often spelled Myles) Standish, moved to Duxbury for elbow room once Plymouth Colony became established.

The Aldens, youngest of the Pilgrims, set up housekeeping in Duxbury in 1632 in a tiny (380 square feet) cottage. Their family had grown to 10 children by 1653 when they finally built the handsome Colonial on what is now Alden Street. That house, with the original 1632 wing, is still in excellent condition, and was used as a private home well into this century. Now it is a museum furnished with period antiques, many donated by the Alden Kindred, who meet there periodically for family reunions.

The town boasts more than half a dozen other authenticated homes from the 1600's, more than 40 from the 1700's and 80 from 1800 to 1880, all identified by wooden plaques.

One of Duxbury's most distinguished buildings, the Alexander Standish House, was built in 1666 by Miles Standish's eldest son, who married Sarah Alden, daughter of John and Priscilla. Privately owned, it stands on Captain's Nook, a 300-acre peninsula that faces southeast into Plymouth Bay.

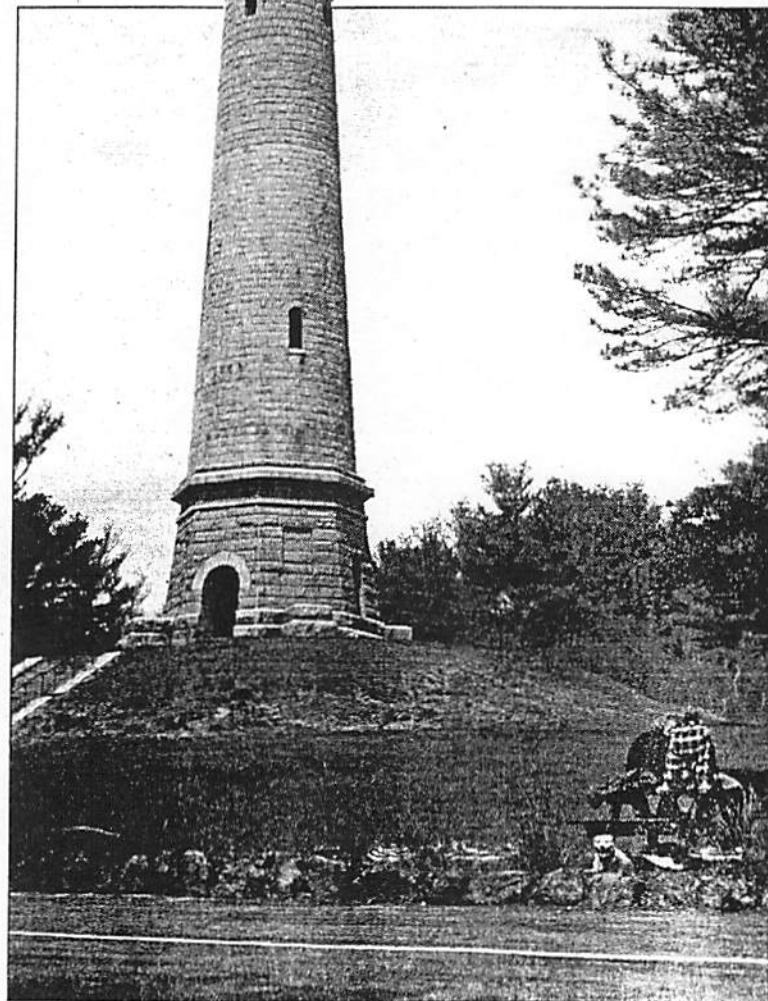
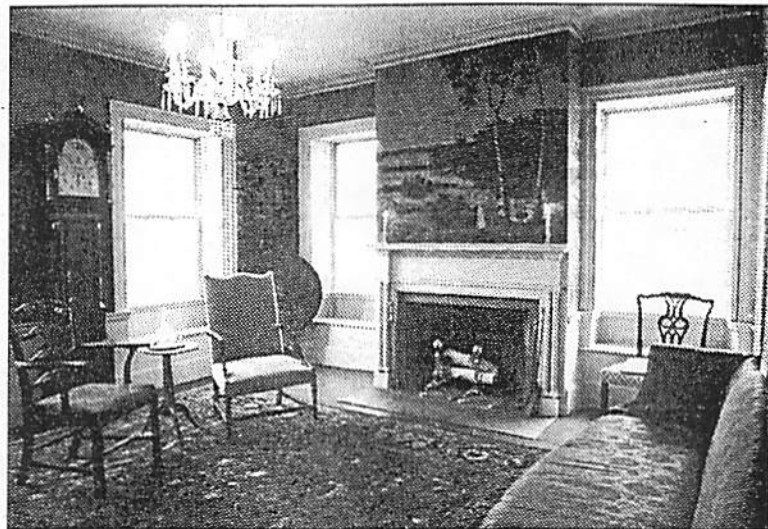
One hundred of the Nook's acres were originally owned by Miles himself, who moved there in 1631. Miles Standish's house was built on a bluff — now a two-acre park — overlooking Plymouth Bay. Granite markers

and an indentation in the earth indicate the spot where the house once stood.

As commander of the Pilgrim militia, Standish chose a home site with a commanding view. Visitors can look south across the bay to Plymouth. To the southeast lie the Atlantic and Clark's Island, where the Pilgrims stopped to offer thanks before disembarking at Plymouth. To the east the delicate four miles of Duxbury's barrier beach separates

RIGHT Parlor of the King Caesar House, built in 1808.

BELOW Miles Standish monument.



Duxbury Bay from the ocean.

To the north, on Captain's Hill, the highest point of the Nook, is another park, Standish Park, with a 116-foot-high granite tower topped by a 14-foot statue of Miles himself. The tower is open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and the exhausting climb to the top affords to the hardy a view that on a clear day extends to Provincetown, the curled tip of Cape Cod 25 miles to the east.

Standish's Pilgrim neighbors included Elder William Brewster, parson of the First Parish Church, which he founded in 1632. Along Marshal Street on the Nook, another granite marker points out a stand of lilacs originally brought from Holland by Brewster. They still bloom today at the site of his homestead.

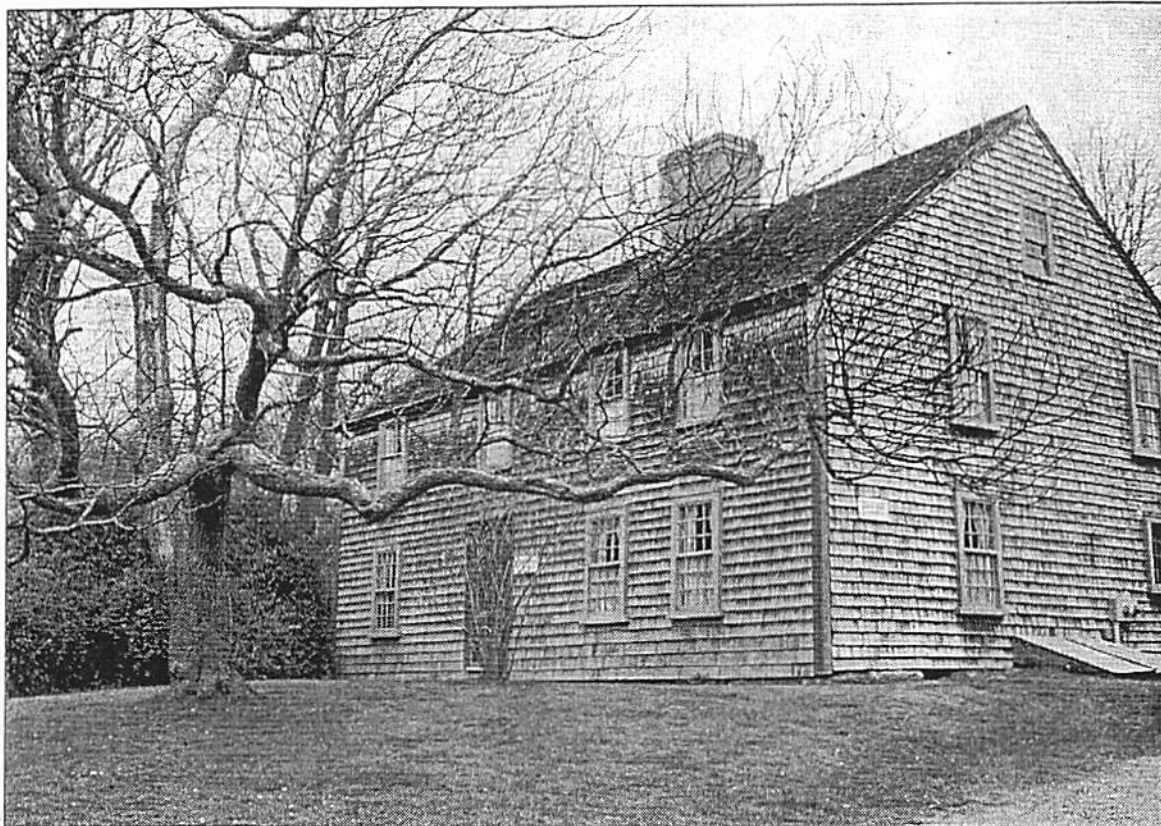
All roads from the Nook lead to Hall's Corner, where a rotary winds around a flagpole marking the tiny commercial center of Duxbury, which has a population of about 14,000. There's a florist, a gas station, a couple of shops, a pizzeria and a supermarket as well as a small Dunkin' Donuts.

The recent opening of the Dunkin' Donuts followed a full year of sometimes heated public debate, since no chain store had ever been allowed in town, except for the ancient A&P. When a local businessman finally got a grudging nod, it was with the proviso that the familiar pink and orange Dunkin' Donuts sign be toned

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The Alden House, built in 1653, in Duxbury, Mass.

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down to a decidedly Puritan gray and white.

Duxbury Pizza is a good lunch stop, and almost next door the minuscule Scoops ice cream shop, with its pink and white awning and window box of impatiens, looks like a prop from a Lionel train set.

Straight up Chestnut Street is the Old Burial Ground, which was founded in 1632 as the First Parish Church's churchyard; a sign calls it the oldest continuously maintained cemetery in the United States. It is the resting place of John and Priscilla and many other Aldens as well as Miles and other Standishes. Their headstones mingle with the graves of lesser-known Pilgrims and 17th- and 18th-century settlers.

A look at the markers, with their death-head angels and plaintive rhymes, reminds one of the harsh life of the early settlers: whole families wiped out in a week by fever or a beloved daughter lost at sea when her ship foundered on the 30-mile voyage north to Boston.

Shipping, in fact, is Duxbury's other claim to fame. In the early 19th century, it was one of the country's shipbuilding centers, as a drive down Washington Street, left from Hall's

Corner, will attest.

The two-mile stretch of tree-lined bayside road has dozens of grand Federal-style houses labeled with early 19th-century captains' or shipbuilders' names.

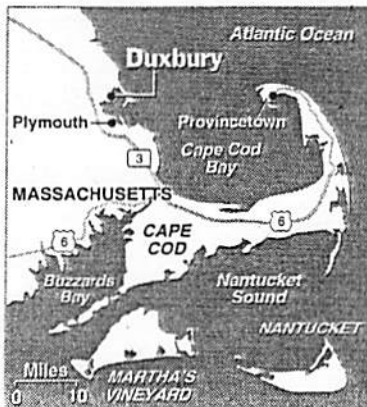
Halfway down the street, a right leads onto Mattakeeset Court and into Snug Harbor, whose name reflects its intimate scale. Visitors may have a chance to chat with the harbor master as his golden retriever dives into the harbor to greet weekend sailors, or they can just watch the sailboats come and go against the backdrop of Duxbury Beach to the east and the mansions

of Power Point to the north.

The Snug Harbor area is also home to several antiques shops, an excellent wine store and the French Memories Bakery, opened several years ago by two young French couples.

Continuing north on Washington Street, and bearing right at the next flagpole, one arrives at the town's other peninsula, Powder Point. Along the bay is the King Caesar House, built in 1808 by Ezra Weston, who was nicknamed King Caesar by contemporaries to reflect his status as the premier shipbuilder in America at the time. The house is now a museum of the affluent era of shipbuilding, 1800 to 1840.

King Caesar House faces a small bayside park, where one can look back to Snug Harbor or east to Duxbury Beach. To the southeast is a collection of rooftops and spires that seem to rise straight up out of the sea. That's Gurnet, a tiny community of about 200 people who live at the southern tip of Duxbury Beach, where glaciers once piled up enough rocks to make a little rise where grass grew. There is no electricity except what the residents generate themselves, and one needs a four-wheel drive and a resident permit to reach Gurnet. During some high tides, even that is not enough.



The New York Times

AROUND Powder Point past the magnificent bay-front houses is the wooden Powder Point Bridge, a half-mile long, which connects Powder Point with Duxbury Beach. A resident permit is required to park on the ocean side of the bridge, but visitors may use a small sand lot on the near end (there is usually parking available, except on very hot weekend days or summer holidays) and walk across to the completely undeveloped four-mile stretch, visible on the map as a bony finger extending into the Atlantic just north of Cape Cod. The hardy may swim in the ocean, which rarely edges above 65 degrees, or the bay, which can get 10 degrees warmer.

By virtue of its wetlands, marshes and cranberry bogs, Duxbury is also a bird sanctuary where piping plovers and nesting ospreys may be seen.

Duxbury is not a tourist destination. There are no information kiosks, no McDonald's, no saltwater taffy, no neon and only one traffic light in the town. That's part of its appeal for the few who amble or bike through its quiet streets. ■

Dropping in on the Standishes

How to Get There

From Boston take Route 3 south 30 miles to exit 10 east. Turn right at the Milepost Restaurant to the traffic rotary at Hall's Corner.

Where to Stay

The Winsor House Inn, 390 Washington Street, Duxbury, Mass. 02332; (617) 934-0991, fax (617) 934-5955. Built in 1803, in the Snug Harbor area. It has two rooms and one suite, \$89 to \$135. The inn also offers a 36-foot cutter-rigged Cape Dory sailboat sleeping six for charter, complete with crew and chef, for day sails or overnights. The cost, including all meals but not liquor, is \$700 for the boat for a full day and \$1,200 for an overnight.

The Duxbury Motor Inn, 338 Kingstown Way, Duxbury, Mass. 02331; (617) 585-6628. Offers 16 modern units ranging from rooms to two-bedroom suites with kitchens from \$52 to \$80 for two. Situated on the west side of town, it's about a 10-

minute ride from the Old Village section.

Where to Eat

The Milepost Restaurant, 581 Tremont Street; (617) 934-6801. Just up the road from the Old Burial Ground, serves lunch (\$20 for two without wine) and dinner (\$50 for two with wine) in a dining room with fireplace and pub fare in the bar. Lunch: clam chowder, burgers, fried clams, broiled scrod. Dinner: seafood scampi, bouillabaisse, veal piccata, prime rib.

The Winsor House Inn serves dinner (\$60 for two with wine) in a series of rooms. Appetizers include crab cakes and lamb carpaccio; among main courses are creamy lemon chive capellini with grilled lobster and sugarsnap peas, roasted salmon and grilled veal medallions with basil feta polenta. Lunch and lighter fare (\$20 for two) — grilled pizzas, burgers — is available in a 19th-century pub.

K. M. M.